The Black Tulip

Alexandre Dumas

THE BLACK TULIP

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Simplified by Michael West

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1500 word vocabulary

LONGMAN

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INTRODUCTION

The Dutch are the people of Holland. They grow many beautiful flowers. Their flowers are famous all over the world. This story is about a man who tried to grow a black tulip. Tulips are flowers which stand up very straight and have many beautiful colours.

Cornelius Van Baerle was a rich young man who passed his time growing tulips. He grew many kinds of tulips of different colours from any that had been grown before. Most of all he wanted to grow a black tulip, because there was a big prize offered for the first man who could grow a black tulip.

Cornelius had an enemy named Isaac Boxtel. He also was a tulip-grower and he was afraid that Cornelius would get the prize before him, so he went to the offices of government and told stories against Cornelius, and Cornelius was sent to prison. The daughter of the prison-keeper was Rosa. Cornelius and Rosa fell in love and Rosa helped Cornelius to go on growing his tulip. One proud and happy day Rosa was able to bring a new black tulip to show to Cornelius, but soon afterwards Rosa and Cornelius were very unhappy—someone had stolen the black tulip! Of course it was Isaac Boxtel, and he went off with it as fast as he could to Haarlem, where the prize was to be given. Rosa followed him . . . but I shall not tell you the end of the story.

The brothers De Witte who come into the story were real people, and they were killed just as it says in the book. The Prince of Orange, who comes into the story, later became King William III of England.

The Black Tulip was written by a famous French writer, Alexandre Dumas (1803-1870). He also wrote *The Count of Monte Cristo* (Stage 3).

De Witte gave the papers to Van Baerle

One

A HAPPY MAN

In the little town of Dort in Holland, in the year 1672, there lived a really happy man. There are very few really happy men in the world, but Cornelius Van Baerle was one of these very few.

Cornelius began life as a doctor, but when his father died he gave up that work.

Van Baerle's father had gained a lot of money as a trader. When he was near death he said to his son, Cornelius, "Be happy. Working all day in an office is not a happy life. Do not be like me, a trader. Do not be like Cornelius De Witte, a politician,[1] for he will certainly end in trouble. Live quietly and, above all, be happy."

So Cornelius Van Baerle remained in the large house. He did not know how to pass the time, so he began to grow *tulips*. At this time people were very interested in the growing of tulips and great prizes[2] were offered to anyone who could grow some new kind—a tulip of some new shape or new colour. Van Baerle grew three new kinds of tulip: he called them Jane (after his mother), Van Baerle (after his father), and Cornelius (after Cornelius De Witte, his father's friend).

[1] A leader of the people in matters of government.

[2] Prize = something given to a person who does best. The best boy in a class is given a prize.

In the next house to Van Baerle lived a man named Isaac Boxtel. He also was a tulip grower, but he was not rich. He worked very hard—and he hated Van Baerle. He was afraid that this rich man might grow better tulips than his own. He looked over the garden wall and watched everything that Van Baerle did. He even bought a *telescope* so that he might look into the window of Van Baerle's house and see him working with his seeds and *bulbs*. (Tulips are grown from bulbs.) When he saw Van Baerle's garden filled with the most beautiful flowers, he tied two cats together and dropped them over the wall at night. The cats broke down all the flowers.

Van Baerle then put a watchman in the garden to guard his flowers against cats (for he did not know that Boxtel had put the cats there).

Just at this time a prize was offered to anyone who could grow a black tulip without any other colour on it at all. The prize offered was one hundred thousand guilders.[1]

Van Baerle set to work. He grew deep red tulips. Then, from these dark red tulips, he got brown tulips. Next year he had very dark brown tulips.

Boxtel had, up to this time, only got tulips of a light brown colour. He was very angry. He was so angry that he could not work. He could do nothing but watch Van Baerle. He sat at his telescope and looked at Van Baerle working with his bulbs and seeds so as to mix

[1] Guilder = a coin.

one kind of tulip with another. The more Boxtel watched Van Baerle, the more he hated him.

And just at this time Cornelius De Witte arrived in the town.

Two

SECRET PAPERS

Cornelius De Witte reached Van Baerle's house one evening in the month of January, 1672. He looked at the whole house; he saw everything. Then he said, "I wish to be alone with you for a few minutes."

"Come to my seed room," said Van Baerle.

All this time Boxtel was watching everything through his telescope.

Van Baerle took a lamp and led De Witte to the seed room. Here was a large box in which the seeds and bulbs were kept.—Boxtel watched through his telescope more carefully than ever! He saw the light come into the room. He saw De Witte and knew who he was (for Cornelius De Witte was well known as a leader of the government).

De Witte said a few words to Van Baerle. Boxtel could not tell what those words were. Then De Witte took out a number of papers all tied together. De Witte gave the papers to Van Baerle. It was clear that the papers were very important. Boxtel thought that they were papers written about matters of government. But why (thought Boxtel) were government papers given to

Van Baerle who was not interested in public matters at all?

Boxtel knew that the public did not like Cornelius De Witte. Every month they hated him more. Perhaps those papers were some secret of the government which De Witte did not wish to have known.

Van Baerle took the papers and put them in a box with his bulbs. De Witte then said something; he shook Van Baerle's hand. They went out of the room. Soon afterwards De Witte went out into the street.

Boxtel was right in his thoughts. The papers which De Witte gave to Van Baerle were letters to the King of France.—But De Witte was careful not to tell his friend what was in the papers. He only asked him to keep them carefully and not to give them up to anyone except himself or a person whom he might send.

Van Baerle put the papers away in the box and thought no more about them.

Three

DE WITTE SENDS A MESSAGE

The Hague was the chief city of Holland. On August 20th, 1672, its streets were full of men carrying guns. They were all hurrying towards the prison.

Just outside the prison was a company of horsemen keeping back the crowd; and inside the prison were Cornelius De Witte and his brother, John De Witte.

"On to the prison!" shouted the crowd. "The brothers De Witte shall not escape! Kill them!"

The soldiers outside the prison remained unmoved.

"Kill the brothers De Witte!" shouted the crowd.

The captain of the soldiers rode forward.

"What do you want?" he said.

"We want the brothers De Witte! We want to kill them!"

"My orders," said the captain, "are to allow no one near the prison, and if you come any nearer, I shall shoot!"

The crowd drew back.

Inside the prison Cornelius De Witte was lying ill on a bed. John stood by his side.

"Dear Cornelius," he said, "are you better? I have a *carriage* near the back of the prison, all ready for your escape."

"Death to the brothers De Witte," shouted the crowd.

"I hear the noise of a crowd," said Cornelius.

"Yes," answered John; "they are crying out against us because of our letters to the French king.—Where are those letters?"

"I have left them with Van Baerle," answered Cornelius. "He lives at Dort."

"Van Baerle!" cried John. "Poor Van Baerle! He knows nothing about these matters. But, if the letters are found in his house, he will be killed or put in prison."

"Death to the brothers De Witte!" shouted the crowd from below.

"Those letters must be burnt," said John. "We must send orders to Van Baerle to burn them."

"Whom can we send?" said Cornelius.

"Send Craeke, my servant. He is here," answered John.

There was a book on the table. Cornelius took it. He took a page from the book and wrote on it.

Cornelius De Witte wrote this letter on the page of the book:

"My dear Van Baerle,

"Please burn the letters which I gave you without looking at them. It is not safe for you to know what is written in them. Burn them and you will save the lives and good name of Cornelius and John De Witte.

Cornelius De Witte.

August 20th, 1672."

John took the letter and gave it to Craeke.

The noise of the crowd was louder: "Death to the brothers De Witte!"

"Come," said John, "we must go."

A man made his way through the crowd.

"I have an order from the government," said the man. "The order tells you to take away the soldiers."

The crowd came closer to the soldiers.

"Stop!" cried the officer, "or I shall shoot."

"It is an order," shouted the man. "It is an order to you to take your men away."

"This means death to the brothers De Witte," said the officer, "but I must obey.—Men! Right turn! Forward!"

The soldiers moved away.

Four

DEATH IN THE STREET

Cornelius De Witte got up from his bed; his brother John helped him. They left the room and went down the stairs. At the bottom of the stairs stood Rosa, daughter of the prison-keeper. She was a beautiful girl of about eighteen years of age.

"I want to tell you something," said Rosa.

"What is it, my child?" said John De Witte.

"Do not go out into the street," said Rosa. "The soldiers are just moving away. The people will kill you if they see you."

"What shall we do?" asked Cornelius.

"Go out at the back gate," said Rosa. "It opens into a little lane, and I have told the driver of your carriage to wait for you there."

"The question is whether your father Gryphus, the prison-keeper, will open the door," said John.

"I know that he will not open it," said Rosa, "but I took his key. Here it is."

"My child," said Cornelius, "I cannot thank you enough. I have nothing to give you except the book which you will find in my room. I know that you can-

At the bottom of the stairs stood Rosa

not read, but perhaps someone will teach you. It is the last gift of a man who tried to save his country; I hope it will bring good to you."

"I thank you, sir," said Rosa. "I will keep it always. —But I cannot read. I wish that I knew how to read."

The shouts from the crowd became louder.

"Come quickly," said Rosa.

They followed her down some stairs; they crossed a little yard. Rosa opened a small door and they passed out into the street.

"Good-bye, my child," said Cornelius and John.

"Go quickly," cried Rosa. "The people are breaking in the gate."

The carriage moved away. It came at last to the gate of the city.

"Open! " cried the driver. "Open the gate! "

"I cannot open it," said the gate-man. "The key has been taken away from me."

"We must try another gate," cried John.

The carriage turned. Some men came running round the corner. Others came running after them.

"Faster! Drive faster! " cried John.

The men stood across the road. "Stop! " they shouted.

The carriage went on. A man was thrown to the ground and the carriage passed over him. More people ran into the street. There was no way on.

"Stop! " cried John. "We must leave the carriage."

"There they are! " shouted the people.

A man struck one of the horses on the head and it fell down.

Others pulled John and Cornelius out of the carriage.

"My brother! Where is my brother?" cried John De Witte.

Cornelius was already lying dead in the road. A man put a gun to John's head, but the gun did not fire. He raised the gun above his head and struck John to the ground.

Soon afterwards the bodies of the two brothers were hanging from a tree outside the prison.

The people had done their work!

Five

VAN BAERLE GOES TO PRISON

While the people of The Hague were killing Cornelius and John De Witte, Craeke was riding along the road to Dort. He left his horse in a hut and went on by a boat along the river. He soon saw Dort at the foot of a hill. There were fine red houses standing on the edge of the water, and on the side of the hill there was one house larger than the others near some tall trees. That was Van Baerle's house.

Craeke left the boat and went towards the house.

Cornelius Van Baerle was in his seed room looking at three bulbs which he held in his hand.

"I believe that I have found the Black Tulip!" he was saying. "I shall win the hundred thousand guilders offered for a black tulip. I shall give the money to the poor people of Dort. All the tulip growers in the world

will know my name. The tulip shall be called 'The Black Tulip of Van Baerle'.—Perhaps I will give only fifty thousand guilders to the poor and use the other fifty thousand to grow other tulips.—Oh, my beautiful bulbs! "

Just at this moment the bell rang. A servant came to the door.

"Who is that?" asked Van Baerle.

"It is a man from The Hague; he has a letter for you. His name is Craeke."

"Craeke! " said Van Baerle. "That is the servant of John De Witte.—Ask him to wait for a few minutes."

"I cannot wait," said Craeke, coming into the room so suddenly that two of the bulbs fell from Van Baerle's hand.

"What is the matter?" said Van Baerle. "Why do you come in like that?"

"What is the matter?—The matter is that you must read this paper at once," said Craeke.

"All right, my dear Craeke," said Van Baerle. "I will read your paper." He put the paper on the table; then he took up the bulbs from the floor. "Ah! they are not hurt," he said.

"Oh, sir! Sir! " said a servant, running into the room. "Go at once! "

"What is the matter now?" said Van Baerle.

"The house is full of soldiers," cried the servant.

"What do they want?" asked Van Baerle.

"They want you! You must go; go now. Jump out of the window! " cried the servant.

"I shall not jump out of the window," said Cornelius. "I should fall on my tulips in the garden."

He looked round to find some piece of paper in which he might put his three bulbs. He found the letter which Craeke had brought. Without thinking what the paper was, he put the three bulbs in the paper and hid them inside his coat.

An officer and six soldiers came into the room.

"Are you Cornelius Van Baerle?" said the officer.

"I am," said Cornelius.

"Give me the government letters which you have in your house."

"Letters! I don't know what you mean," said Van Baerle.

"I mean the letters which Cornelius De Witte left with you in January."

"Oh! I cannot give you those letters. My friend, Cornelius De Witte, asked me to give them to no one except himself or his servant."

"I order you to open that box," said the leader of the soldiers.—"You will not do it? Then I shall open the box myself!"

The officer opened the box. He took the letters out of the box and looked at them.

"Well!" he said, "we were told that the letters were here, and here they are!"

"What do you mean?" said Van Baerle.

"Don't try to seem as if you did not know. You must come with me. You are my prisoner."

"What have I done?"

"The judge will tell you that," said the officer.

"Where is the prison?"

"At The Hague."

Van Baerle said good-bye to his servants, then he followed the officer and got into the carriage.

Six

BOXTEL FOLLOWS

It was Boxtel who had told the government about the letters in Van Baerle's house. Through his telescope he had seen Cornelius De Witte give the letters to Cornelius. He thought that these might be secret letters about matters of government.

"Oh!" he said, "I will tell the officers of the government about this. Then they will come and make Van Baerle a prisoner. As soon as he is taken away I shall go into his house and find the bulbs of the Black Tulip, and get the hundred thousand guilders."

Boxtel saw the soldiers lead Van Baerle away.—Evening came, and the servants shut up the house. Night came; stars were in the sky, and from far below came the restless noise of the city. The sounds of the city died away into silence.

Then Boxtel took a lamp. He climbed quickly over the wall. He forced open a window and went into the house. He went up the stairs into the seed room. He looked in the box, on the table—everywhere; but there

were no bulbs. He looked again. No! the bulbs had gone. Where had they gone?

"Van Baerle has taken them to The Hague!" he said. "To The Hague!—I shall follow him to The Hague."

Seven

A LONG NIGHT

While the crowd were running through the prison looking for Cornelius and John De Witte, Rosa and her father Gryphus hid in one of the rooms downstairs. At last, not finding the brothers, the crowd went away. After a long time Gryphus and Rosa came out. It was midnight. Just as they came out, a carriage stopped at the gate of the prison and Cornelius Van Baerle was brought in.

"He is a friend of the De Witte brothers," said the officer to Gryphus.

"A friend of the De Wittes!" said Gryphus. "Ha! He shall have their room."

Gryphus laughed as he led Van Baerle into the room. Rosa went with them, holding up a lamp, and its golden light fell upon her beautiful face. She looked at the poor young man who was being made a prisoner and felt sorry for him.

At last they came to the room. "There is your bed," said Gryphus, pointing to a hard wooden thing in the corner. The door was shut. The light of Rosa's lamp went away. Darkness remained.

Van Baerle lay on the bed with his eyes turned towards the narrow window. He saw the black shapes of trees standing up against the sky. Hour after hour he watched them. Then a grey light came into the sky. The sun came up.

Cornelius rose from the bed and went to the window. There was a tree at the end of the yard. From it hung two bodies.—Below them was a paper with big letters on it:

CORNELIUS AND JOHN DE WITTE
ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE

Van Baerle read the paper. He gave a loud cry.

Gryphus opened the door. "Why are you making a noise so early in the morning?" he said. "Stop it!"

Van Baerle pointed at the bodies.

"Oh, that!" said Gryphus.—"That is what happens to people who write letters which they ought not to write. And the same thing may happen to those who keep such letters."

Gryphus shut the door.

Van Baerle had fallen on the floor. After some time he stood up. He took from inside his coat the three bulbs and looked at them.

So all his work was wasted! Here in the prison there was no earth, no sunlight. How could he grow his Black Tulip?

Eight

GRYPHUS BREAKS HIS ARM

In the evening Gryphus came to bring Van Baerle his food. Just as he opened the door, Gryphus fell and broke his arm. He got up from the floor. Van Baerle did not think of trying to escape. He ran forward to help Gryphus.

Just then Rosa came running up the stairs. She knew that Gryphus sometimes hit the prisoners; she thought that Van Baerle had struck her father. Van Baerle understood her thoughts.

"He fell and I am trying to help him," he said. "He has broken his arm."

"Thank you! Oh, thank you!" said Rosa. "Are you a doctor?"

"I was a doctor some years ago," said Van Baerle.

"So you may be able to make my arm right?" asked Gryphus.

"Yes. I need two pieces of wood and some cloth. You have broken the bone," said Van Baerle.

"Help me to get up from the floor, Rosa," said Gryphus.

She helped him to get up; he sat on the bed. Then she ran and brought two pieces of wood and some cloth.

Van Baerle set the bones in place. Gryphus gave a cry of pain; then his eyes closed; he knew nothing.

Rosa turned to Van Baerle. "I want to help you," she said. "You will be judged to-morrow and the judge will order that you are to be hanged—hanged like the brothers De Witte. You can escape now, before my father opens his eyes. Go! Go quickly!"

"No," answered Van Baerle. "I will not go. If they find that I have gone they will say that you let me go.—I have done no wrong."

"Silence! My father must not know that we have been talking to each other," said Rosa.

"Why?" asked Van Baerle.

"Because he would never allow me to come here again," said Rosa.

"Will you come and talk to me again?"

"Yes," said Rosa.

Van Baerle felt as if the sunlight had come into his room.

"What are you saying?" said Gryphus, opening his eyes.

"The doctor was saying that you must keep very quiet," answered Rosa.

"And I say that you must not talk to the prisoners," said Gryphus.

Nine

LED OUT TO DEATH

On the following day Van Baerle was called before the judges. They questioned him; then they said that their orders would be sent to the prison later. Van Baerle was taken back to the prison to wait.

After about half an hour an officer came to the prison. Rosa opened the door of Van Baerle's room (for Gryphus was ill in bed); she was crying.

The officer read out the orders of the judge:

"The prisoner shall be taken from the prison into the yard and there his head shall be cut off."

Cornelius Van Baerle listened to the words. He seemed surprised rather than sad.

"Have you anything to say?" asked the officer.

"Oh, no," said Van Baerle. "Only I should never have guessed that this would be the cause of my death.—On what day is my head to be cut off?"

"To-day," answered the officer, surprised at Van Baerle's calmness.

Rosa was weeping.

"At what time?" asked Van Baerle.

"At twelve o'clock."

"Ah!" said Cornelius. "I heard the clock strike ten a long time ago. I have not got much time."

The officer went out.

Rosa turned to Cornelius with tears in her eyes.

"Oh, sir," she said.

"Don't weep," said Cornelius. "Don't cry any more; tell me what is the matter."

"Tell me, is there anything that I can do for you?" said Rosa.

"Yes—give me your hand, and promise that you will not laugh at what I ask," said Cornelius.

"Laugh!—Cannot you see my tears?" said Rosa.

"Rosa," said Cornelius, "I have never seen anyone more beautiful than you, and—I must not say any more, because I shall soon have left this world."

The clock struck eleven.

"I must be quick," said Cornelius. He took the three bulbs from the inside of his coat. The three bulbs were still in the same piece of paper. "My dear girl, I have always loved flowers. I believe that I have found how to grow a black tulip. One hundred thousand guilders will be given to anyone who can grow a black tulip. I give you these bulbs. The hundred thousand guilders will be a nice gift to you when you marry. Promise to marry a fine young man who will love you—as much as I love flowers."

"But, sir!"

"Let me speak. I have no brothers, no sisters, no one in the world. My only wish is that when the tulip is grown, you will call it by your name and mine—the Rosa Baerle tulip. Give me some paper and I will write this for you."

Rosa gave Van Baerle a book.

"That book belonged to your friend Cornelius De

Witte," she said. "Write in it what you wish. I cannot read, but I can get someone to read it for me."

So Cornelius Van Baerle wrote:

"On this day, the 25th of August, 1672, I give to Rosa Gryphus three bulbs which will (I believe) produce next May a black tulip, for which a hundred thousand guilders has been offered by the Flower-growers of The Hague. I wish the money to be given to Rosa Gryphus at her marriage to a good man of about my age who loves her, and whom she loves. And I ask that the flower be called Rosa Baerle—her name and mine joined together. I wish to her happiness and a long life.

Cornelius Van Baerle."

He read out what he had written.

"Do you agree?" he asked.

"No," she answered. "The money cannot belong to me. I shall never love anyone, and I shall never marry."

A step was heard on the stairs.

"I will do anything you ask me," she said, "except marry. I will take the bulbs." She put them near her heart.

The officer came into the room. Soldiers followed him. Rosa had fallen to the ground; her golden hair was lying across her face, hiding her closed eyes, but her hand was still pressed to her heart, holding the tulips, and in her fingers was the paper in which the tulips had been put. On that paper was the writing of Cornelius De Witte.—If Van Baerle had read that writing it would have saved his life, and his tulips.

Ten

SAVED!

The yard of the prison was full of people. In the middle there was a raised place. On it was a piece of wood on which the prisoner would put his head; and near that piece of wood stood a man with an axe.

The people pressed closer and closer. One man forced his way through the crowd. It was Boxtel.

Now Boxtel thought that Cornelius Van Baerle would certainly carry the bulbs with him to his death. So he went to the axe-man and said, "I am a friend of Van Baerle and wish to take away his body after his death. I will give you one hundred guilders if you will allow me to do this."

"Yes," said the axe-man, "you can take the body, but you must pay me the money first."

So Boxtel paid the money and stood close to the place where Van Baerle's head was to be cut off.

The people waited.

Boxtel waited.

A wave seemed to pass over the people, like the wind passing over a field of corn. Every head was turned when Van Baerle came out of the prison.

The soldiers made a way for him through the people. There was a deep sound—"Ah! ", as Van Baerle went up the steps and the axe-man moved forward to meet him.

"Yes," said the axe-man, "you can take the body."

But Cornelius was not thinking of the people, or of the axe or of his death. He was thinking only of the beautiful tulips which would come out of his three bulbs—three beautiful tulips.

He reached the top of the steps. He went down on his knees and said a prayer.

"Now!" thought Boxtel; "soon the axe will fall, and I shall get the tulips."

Cornelius put his head down. The man raised his axe.

"Ah!" thought Boxtel. "One—two—three——"

The man brought his axe slowly down and touched Cornelius' neck. Cornelius was thinking of the tulips, and of Rosa's golden hair.

Again the man raised his axe.

"Now," said Boxtel, "this time——"

The axe came slowly down. It was necessary to be sure of hitting the neck just in the right place.

"Beautiful black tulips," thought Van Baerle, "and the golden hair lying across her closed eyes."

The axe was raised again.

"Now this third time the axe will fall," thought Boxtel.

"This is the end," thought Cornelius. "I do hope that Rosa will grow the tulips in the right way."

Cornelius felt the edge of the axe touch his neck. But —what had happened? He still saw the trees and blue sky, and he heard the deep sound of the people's many voices,—like bees in summer.

Then suddenly Van Baerle felt gentle hands raising him up. There was someone by his side holding a large

piece of paper. The people were silent. The officer was reading the paper: it was an order from the Prince of Orange, ruler of Holland, that Cornelius was not to be killed, but kept in prison all his life.

"Well," said Cornelius, "Rosa will be there, and the three bulbs of the Black Tulip."

But Cornelius had forgotten that there are seven prisons in Holland, and the order of the government was that he was to be put in the prison at Loevestein, near Dort. Rosa would not be at Loevestein.

A carriage came into the prison yard. Van Baerle got into the carriage. It drove away.

And one man looked very angrily after it.

That man was Boxtel.

Eleven

A MESSAGE TO DORT

As Cornelius sat in his prison-room at Loevestein he thought of two things only—a flower, and Rosa; and both of them seemed lost to him for ever.—But he was wrong.

One morning he sat at his window breathing in the fresh air which came from the river and looking towards his dear city of Dort. As he sat there he saw *pigeons* coming from the city and sitting on the roof of the prison.

"These pigeons," thought Van Baerle, "are coming from Dort, so they will go back to Dort. If I tie a note to the leg of one of the pigeons I can send a message to Dort.—But I must also get a message from Dort. How

can that be done? I must get two pigeons and get eggs. Then the pigeons will fly to Dort and will come back here, for this will be their home."

Every day he put food in the window, and at last he caught two pigeons. After some weeks the pigeon laid eggs.

As soon as there were eggs, he tied two notes to the leg of the mother-pigeon. She flew away and came back in the evening. The notes were still tied to her leg. For fifteen days she flew away to Dort, and came back, and the notes were still on her leg. Then, on the sixteenth day, she came back without the notes.

The first note was written to the old servant at his house, and with it there was a second note for Rosa. The old servant was still taking care of the pigeons at Van Baerle's house; she saw a strange pigeon among them. Then she saw the notes. And then she found Rosa and gave her the letter.

And so it happened that, one evening in February, Cornelius heard on the stairs a voice which he loved so well. It was Rosa's voice. There was a little barred opening in the door. Rosa pressed her face against the bars.

"Oh, sir, sir," she said, "here I am."

Cornelius held out his hands.

"Rosa!" he cried.

"Be quiet! Don't speak so loud. My father is near. He is in the yard getting his orders from the head of the prison."

"His orders?"

"Yes," said Rosa. "When I got your letter I went to the Prince of Orange, ruler of our country, and asked that my father might be moved to this prison to work here. The Prince did not, of course, know the reason why I asked this, but he allowed it. And so I am here."

"And I can see you every day?"

"Perhaps," said Rosa.

"Do you love me a little, dear Rosa?"

"Here is my father," said Rosa.

Gryphus had come to the top of the stairs.

Twelve

A VISIT FROM ROSA

"Well!" said Gryphus as he came into Van Baerle's room, "I am surprised to see you. I did not expect to meet you again."

"I am pleased to see that your arm is better," answered Cornelius.

"I am your new prison-keeper, and I shall not treat you gently. I do not believe in treating prisoners gently. They have all sorts of tricks." Gryphus went to the window. "Well, you can see a lot from here; it's a nice window." The two pigeons were frightened by Gryphus and flew away. "Oh! what are those?"

"My pigeons," answered Cornelius.

"Pigeons? I can't allow pigeons! Tomorrow they shall be killed and cooked."

Gryphus put his head out of the window to look at

the pigeons' nest. While he did this, Rosa touched Cornelius' hand and said, "At nine o'clock this evening."

"Yes," said Gryphus, going towards the door, "tomorrow they shall be killed." He went out, followed by Rosa, and shut the door.

The clock was striking nine when Rosa came to the door.

"Here I am," she said. "My father sleeps every day after his dinner. So I can come every day at this time."

"Oh, thank you, dear Rosa."

"I have brought your bulbs with me," she said. "I could not read your letter, but I knew that you wanted your bulbs."

"And I wanted you, Rosa," said Cornelius.

"And your bulbs," said Rosa. She passed them through the opening in the door, but Cornelius gave them back to her.

"It is not safe to keep all the three bulbs together," he said. "We must be very careful. We will grow one bulb at a time. Is there a garden in this prison?"

"Yes, there is a very fine garden," said Rosa.

"Bring me some earth from the garden so that I may see if it is good. You shall then plant one bulb in the garden, and I will plant one in a pot in this room, and you, Rosa, shall keep the third bulb, so that we may have one left if anything happens to the other two. In this way we shall be sure to get the hundred thousand guilders for your marriage. But there are many dangers."

"What dangers?" asked Rosa.

"Mice are a danger," said Cornelius; "they eat the bulbs. Cats are the second danger; many of my flowers in Dort were broken down by cats. And the third and greatest danger is man. Men have been put in prison for stealing one guilder: what would not a man do to get a hundred thousand guilders?"

"The window of my room opens on to the garden," said Rosa. "I will watch the plant most carefully. I will guard it against all dangers. No man ever comes into the prison garden."

"Oh, thank you, dear Rosa."

So Rosa carried away two of the bulbs and one bulb remained with Cornelius.

Thirteen

A READING LESSON

Rosa brought to Cornelius some earth from the garden, and Cornelius put it in a pot in his prison-room. At the beginning of April he planted the first bulb.

Every evening Rosa came to see Cornelius and they talked about tulips—and about other things too.

Rosa made ready a place in the garden for the second bulb—a piece of earth far from trees or walls; and she told Cornelius all that she had done.

"Well done, Rosa!" he said. "You are sure to win your hundred thousand guilders. But I am afraid of one thing."

"Of what?" asked Rosa.

"I am afraid that your father may be moved away from this prison. If that happens, how shall I write to you?"

"You can write, Cornelius, but I cannot read your letters. You must teach me how to read and write. Then we can never be separated any more."

"When shall we begin?" asked Cornelius.

"Now," said Rosa.

"Now?—but we have no book to read."

"Oh, yes," said Rosa, "we have a book. We have that book which Cornelius De Witte gave me. I will bring it to-morrow evening, and you shall begin to teach me."

Next evening Rosa brought the book. They always had to talk through the little barred opening in the door. Rosa held the book up to the opening, and in her other hand she held the lamp. Then Cornelius got a little piece of wood and fixed the book to the opening, so that Rosa's hand was free. He pointed to the words one by one, and Rosa read. The lamplight shone on her golden hair and on her little white finger following the lines of print. She learned quickly.

Fourteen

THE FIRST BULB

Rosa came half an hour later than usual.

"Oh," she said, "don't be angry with me. An old friend of my father has come here and wants to see the

prison. He makes my father laugh, and he gives my father money."

"Is that all you know about him?" asked Cornelius. "Are you sure he has not been sent into the prison by the government to spy on the prisoners—and the prison-guards?"

"Oh, no, I do not believe that," said Rosa. "Whom could he watch? My father?"

"Perhaps he has been sent to watch me," said Cornelius. "Or perhaps he wants to become your husband."

"This man came to the prison in The Hague," said Rosa. "It was just at the time when you were there. When I came here, he came too. At The Hague he said that he wanted to see you. But yesterday I heard him say to my father that he did not know you. Are you sure that he is not your friend?"

"No. I have no friends. There is only the old servant at my house," said Cornelius.

"Yesterday evening I was working in the garden, getting the earth ready for your bulb, and I saw a shadow moving among the trees. It was the man. He was watching me."

"Ah! He is in love with you. Is he young? Is he nice-looking?"

"No!" cried Rosa, "he is very ugly and he is nearly fifty years old."

"What is his name?"

"Jacob Gissels."

"I do not know him," said Cornelius.

"Is your tulip growing up nicely?" asked Rosa.

"Yes," said Cornelius. "This morning I saw the first leaves come up above the earth. I have great hopes."

"When shall I plant my bulb?"

"Not yet. I will tell you. But do not tell anyone about it. It is a secret.—Have you still got the third bulb?"

"Yes. It is still in the same paper in which you gave it to me. I have hidden it among my clothes. I must go now.—I thought I heard something move on the stairs. —But that is not my father's step."

Rosa ran quickly to the stairs; but there was no one there.

On the next three days Gryphus came to Cornelius' room at unexpected hours. It seemed as if he was trying to discover some secret. Cornelius put his tulip outside the window, where it could not be seen.

Gryphus found nothing. Then on the eighth day Gryphus suddenly opened the door when Cornelius was looking at his bulb. He ran forward and seized the pot.

"What have you got there?" he said. "Ah! I have caught you. A pot with earth in it!" Gryphus pushed his fingers into the earth.

"Take care!" cried Cornelius. He took the pot from Gryphus.

"Oh! you're going to fight me, are you? Shall I call the soldiers?" He seized the pot again. He pulled out the bulb and threw it down on the floor; then he put his foot on the bulb.

Cornelius took the pot to throw at Gryphus

Cornelius gave a cry of anger. He took the pot and was just going to throw it at the head of Gryphus, when he heard Rosa's voice.

"Father! Father!" she cried.

"What are you doing here?" he answered. "This is not your business."

"Oh, my tulip! My tulip!" cried Cornelius, taking up the broken pieces from the floor.

"I will plant the other bulb tomorrow," said Rosa in a low voice so that Gryphus might not hear.

Someone was coming up the stairs.

"That's Mr. Jacob," said Rosa to her father. "He wants you."

"I am coming," shouted Gryphus. "You go first, Rosa. Go on!"

The heavy door of the room closed; and the hope of Cornelius lay broken to pieces on the stone floor.

Fifteen

CORNELIUS MAKES A PLAN

In the evening Rosa came back. She said:

"My father says that he will allow you to grow tulips if you wish."

"What made him say that?" asked Cornelius.

"His friend, Jacob, was very angry when my father told him about the tulip. Oh!—Mr. Jacob was so angry! His eyes were red. I thought he was going to hit

my father.—'You have done that!' he cried. 'You have broken the bulb. You threw it on the floor and put your foot on it! It was a fearful thing to do!'—My father was very surprised. 'Are you mad?' he said. 'You have broken the bulb! Put your foot on it!' cried Mr. Jacob again. Then he turned to me. 'Was that the only bulb he had? Has he got another one?' he asked.

"I did not answer.

"'You can buy a hundred bulbs in the town for a guilder,' said my father.

"'Perhaps the other bulbs are not so precious as that one,' said I.

"'So, my dear Rosa,' said Jacob, 'you think that the bulb was precious.'

"I saw that I had made a mistake.

"'I don't know,' I answered. 'I don't know anything about tulips. I only know that prisoners love anything which helps them to pass the time, and so any such thing is precious to them. This poor Mr. Van Baerle was very happy with the bulb. I think it was very unkind to take away the only thing that made him happy.'

"'But first of all,' said my father, 'we ought to know how he got this bulb. Where did he get the bulb from?'

"I turned away my eyes so that my father should not see them; but my eyes met Jacob's. He seemed to be trying to read my thoughts. I stood up and went towards the door.

"'It should not be difficult to discover that,' said Jacob.

"'How,' asked my father.

"'Perhaps he has three bulbs. Tulip-growers some-

times have three bulbs. Look in his clothes. Perhaps he is carrying the other two bulbs with him.'"

"Did he say that I have three bulbs?" said Cornelius. "Did he say that?"

"Yes," answered Rosa. "I was surprised too.

"'Take him into some other room and look in his clothes; and I will look in his room while he is out of it,' said Jacob."

"Ah! This Mr. Jacob is a thief!" said Cornelius; "he wants to steal my bulbs."

"That is what I think too," said Rosa.

"On the day when you were getting the earth ready for the bulb in your garden, a man followed you," said Cornelius. "Is that so?"

"Yes," said Rosa.

"You saw him moving among the trees?" asked Cornelius.

"Yes," said Rosa.

"So he saw everything that you were doing?"

"Yes," said Rosa.

"He was not following *you*."

"Then whom was he following?" asked Rosa.

"It was my bulb! My tulip!" said Cornelius.

"Why! yes," said Rosa.

"Will you find out if I am right? It would be very easy," said Cornelius.

"Tell me how."

"Go into the garden tomorrow. Be sure that Jacob knows where you are going, so that he may follow you. Pretend to put the bulb in the ground. Then go out of

the garden, but look through a hole in the door and watch him."

"And what then?" said Rosa.

"Then we shall see what he does."

"Ah!" said Rosa sadly, "you love your bulbs very much."

"Yes," answered Cornelius, "when your father put his foot on that bulb it was as if he had broken my heart. And this second bulb, which you will plant in your garden, watch it! Watch over it as a mother over her child, as a soldier his wounded captain."

"I will do as you wish," said Rosa.

Cornelius went on: "If Jacob or your father thinks that the bulb belongs to me, do not come to see me any more. Do not see me, although I have only you in the whole world."

"Ah!" said Rosa. "I see one thing."

"What do you see?"

"I see that you love your tulips so much that you have no room in your heart for any other love."

She ran away.

For many hours Cornelius did not sleep that night. For (would you believe it!) this great tulip-grower was more sorry to lose Rosa than to lose his tulip.

And when he dreamed, he dreamed not about tulips, but about Rosa.

Sixteen

ROSA

Rosa was angry. She lay in bed, but could not sleep. As she lay awake she decided that she would not go to see Cornelius any more. She decided to go on with her reading lessons alone.

So, when morning came, she sat down to read her book. Then she did some writing; she hoped after eight days to be able to write a letter to Cornelius about his tulip.

When morning came Cornelius awoke and wondered whether Rosa would came to see him in the evening. Why did he tell her that he loved his tulip so much? Why did he tell her not to come and see him if her father or Jacob seemed to be watching?

Evening came. Why did he let her think that he loved his tulip more than he loved her?

Cornelius waited. The clock struck seven. It struck eight. It struck nine. Then there was silence. Cornelius put his hand on his heart. He listened for Rosa's footstep.

The clock struck ten.

"She will never come to see me again," he said.

Then. at eleven o'clock, Cornelius lay down on his bed without taking off his clothes.

The clock struck twelve. It was a long, sad night for Cornelius.

The day passed—a long, sad day for Cornelius.

And the second day passed. It was now that week in April in which gardeners plant their tulips.

Cornelius had said to Rosa, "I will tell you the day when you are to put the bulb into the ground."

The weather was just right. The air was warm. Would Rosa let the right day go by? Would he see Rosa and his tulip?

The third day passed. Cornelius could not eat or sleep. He put his head far out of the window, hoping to see Rosa in the garden—Rosa and his tulip.

The fourth day passed. Gryphus brought the prisoner his food and took it away again, uneaten.

"Well," said Gryphus, "I think we shall soon lose our tulip-grower. He will go out of the prison feet first—in a box. He will leave the prison dead."

On the seventh morning, when Cornelius got up from his bed, he saw a paper which had been passed under the door:

"It is all right. Your tulip is going on well."

Cornelius wrote an answer:

"I am not ill because of the tulip, but because you do not come and see me."

Gryphus brought the evening meal; he came back and took it away. Then Cornelius put the note under the door. He listened. He did not hear her footsteps, yet, through the darkness, came Rosa's voice, a little whisper:

"Tomorrow."

Seventeen

THE SECOND BULB

The clock struck eight. Cornelius heard a sound at the door, and he saw Rosa standing there with the lamp in her hand.

She saw how sad he looked and how white his face was.

"Are you ill, Cornelius?" said Rosa.

"Yes," he said, for he was ill in mind and in body.

"I saw that you did not eat," said Rosa, "and my father said that you remained in bed all day. So I wrote a note to calm your fears about the thing which you love most in all the world."

"And I have answered your note," said Cornelius. "As you have come, I thought that you must have received my letter. You cannot say that you were not able to read it, because you have learnt to read wonderfully quickly,—and to write also."

"I have received your note, and read it," said Rosa, "and I have come to see what I can do to bring back your health."

"You can bring back my health by giving me good news. Have you any good news to give me?"

As Cornelius said this, he looked at Rosa, and his eyes were bright with hope.

"I have only to speak to you about your tulip," said Rosa coldly. "I know that that is the thing you care about."

"Oh!" said Cornelius, "I told you, Rosa, that I think only of you. I do not care about the tulip."

She smiled.

"Ah!" she said, "but your tulip has been in great danger."

Cornelius showed his fear. "Danger!" he cried, "what danger?"

"Yes," she said, "it has been in great danger. You were right. Jacob did not come here to look for me. He came here to get your tulip."

"Ah! he did?" cried Cornelius.

"You care more for your tulip than you do for me," said Rosa.

"Oh, no! No! But you have the mind and the strength to defend yourself; my tulip can do nothing against its enemies."

"When you were afraid because of Jacob, I was afraid too. So I did what you asked me to do," said Rosa.

"Tell me what happened."

"I went down into the garden," said Rosa. "I went to the place where I was going to plant your tulip. All the time I looked round to see whether I was being followed. . . ."

"What happened then?" asked Cornelius.

"Then I saw a shadow moving between the gate and the wall; and then it went behind the trees."

"Did you pretend not to see the man?" asked Cornelius.

"Yes. I made a hole in the earth as if I was going to put the bulb in it."

"What was the man doing?" asked Cornelius.

"I made a hole in the earth"

"I saw his eyes shining among the trees."

"Ah! It is as I said," cried Cornelius.

"I made a hole," said Rosa, "and I covered it up again, but I did not put the bulb in. Then, as if I had finished my work, I went out of the garden."

"And then you looked through a hole in the door? And what did you see?" said Cornelius.

"The man waited for a short time. Perhaps he thought that I might come back. Then he came out from his hiding-place. He went to the place where I had been. He stopped and looked all round him. He looked at every window of the house. Then he put both hands into the earth. He pulled up the earth and felt it so as to find the bulb. He did this again and again. Then he understood that he had been tricked. He carefully covered over the place. Then he went towards the garden-gate slowly, as if he had only come to look at the flowers."

"Oh! the thief!" cried Cornelius; "I thought that it was so.—But the bulb, Rosa? What have you done with it? It is already rather late to plant it."

"The bulb has been in the ground for six days," said Rosa.

"Where?" cried Cornelius. "How? In what sort of earth is it? Has it enough sunlight? Is it in a safe place where it cannot be stolen by Jacob?"

"There is no danger of its being stolen," said Rosa, "unless Jacob breaks down the door of my room. The bulb is in a pot in my room."

"Oh! It is in your room? In what sort of earth is it?" asked Cornelius.

"It is in a good stone pot very like the flower-pot in which you planted your tulip; and the earth is just such earth as you told me to use."

"Does it get enough sunlight?" asked Cornelius.

"I put it in the east window during the morning to get the morning sun, and I put it at the south window in the afternoon so as to get the afternoon sun," said Rosa.

"That's right! That's right!" cried Cornelius, "you are a perfect gardener, dear Rosa. Do you mean that the tulip has been in the ground for six days?"

"Yes, for six days," said Rosa.

"And it does not yet show any leaf?"

"No," said Rosa, "but I think it will show some leaf tomorrow."

"Then tomorrow you will bring me some news about it?" said Cornelius.

"Oh, I have got a lot of things to do," answered Rosa.

"You are angry because I love flowers!"

"Oh, no," said Rosa, "I am not angry because you love flowers, but I am sad because you love flowers more than you love me."

"I love only you."

"Yes—after the Black Tulip," said Rosa. "When you wrote in the book of Cornelius De Witte, you ordered me to marry a nice young man of about twenty-six to twenty-eight years of age. I am busy during the day looking after your tulip. You must leave me the

rest of the day in which to look for the nice young man."

"Won't you come and see me tomorrow?" asked Cornelius.

"I will come and see you if——"

"If what?"

"If you say nothing about the Black Tulip," said Rosa.

Eighteen

GRYPHUS FINDS NOTHING

When Cornelius awoke, the sun was coming through the iron bars and the pigeons were flying round the window. During the last few days the prison had seemed heavy, dark and sad; the bars had seemed to shut out the day. But now it was a happy place, full of light and joy.

When Gryphus came to see the prisoner he found him no longer sad and lying in bed, but standing by the window and singing.

"Well!" said Gryphus.

"How are you feeling this morning?" asked Cornelius.

Gryphus did not answer.

"And how is Mr. Jacob? And how is Rosa?"

"Here is your food," said Gryphus.

"Thank you," said Cornelius. "I am hungry."

"Oh, you are hungry?—So your plans for escape are going well? I shall watch you. I shall be watching," said Gryphus.

"Watch as much as you like, my dear Gryphus," said Cornelius. "My plans can do no harm to you."

"At twelve o'clock we shall see," answered Gryphus. "I shall discover your plans at twelve o'clock."

Cornelius waited all the morning to see what would happen.

At last the clock struck twelve. Gryphus came with four soldiers. The door opened and they came into the room.

"Now look everywhere, and find what his secret is," said Gryphus.

They looked everywhere—in the bed, under the bed, in every corner of the room. But they found nothing.

Cornelius was glad that he had not kept the other bulb, but had given it to Rosa; for Gryphus would have found it, and broken it as he broke the first. The only things which Gryphus found were a pencil and a piece of paper, and he took them away.

At six Gryphus came again. Cornelius spoke nicely to him, but Gryphus only made angry noises. Cornelius laughed.

"Laugh!" said Gryphus as he went out. "Let the man who wins laugh!"

Nineteen

ROSA BRINGS NEWS

Rosa came in the evening and they talked about everything except the tulip. Why would not Rosa talk about the tulip? It seemed to be her one fault—that she would not talk about the tulip.

She came again the next evening.

"Well, it's up," she said.

"What's up?"

"The tulip," said Rosa.

"Then you allow me to talk about the tulip?"

"Yes," said Rosa.

"Is it coming up straight?"

"Quite straight," said Rosa.

"How high is it?" asked Cornelius.

"About two inches."

"Oh, Rosa, take great care of it. It will soon grow more quickly."

"I think of nothing else," said Rosa. "It is the first thing which I see in the morning and the last thing which I look at at night. When it is grown up I shall get a hundred thousand guilders and marry a nice young man aged about twenty-six or twenty-eight."

"Oh, Rosa!"

Every evening Rosa had something to tell Cornelius about the tulip.

"There is a flower on it, but it is not open yet," said Rosa.

"Ah!" cried Cornelius. "Is the flower of a good shape?"

"It is perfect," said Rosa.

Two days later, Rosa came and said, "It is opening!"

"Can you see—Can you see—any colour?"

"Yes, it is very dark."

"Is it brown?" said Cornelius.

"Darker than that."

"Darker than that? Is it as dark as the writing in my letter?"

"Yes, it is a very dark brown; it is nearly black."

Cornelius gave a cry of joy.

"Rosa, you are wonderful! My tulip is going to flower, and it will be black! Rosa, you are wonderful. —When do you think the flower will be open?"

"In two or three days," said Rosa.

"Yes, tomorrow or the day after that," said Cornelius.

"And then I must cut it?" said Rosa, laughing.

"Cut it? Oh, no! no! no! When the flower is open, put it in the shade and send a letter to the Flower-growers at Haarlem saying that the Black Tulip is in flower. The prize was offered by the Flower-growers in the city of Haarlem. It is a long way to Haarlem, but you can find someone to send.—Have you any money, Rosa?"

"Oh, yes," said Rosa.

"Have you got enough?"

"I have three hundred guilders," said Rosa.

"Oh. If you have three hundred guilders you must not send anyone; you must go to Haarlem yourself, Rosa," said Cornelius.

"But what will happen to the flower?" asked Rosa.

"You must take the flower with you. You must not be away from it for a minute."

"But while I am with the flower, I am away from you," said Rosa.

"Yes," said Cornelius. "That is true. Oh! why am I in prison?—Well, you must send someone with a letter and perhaps the Flower-growers will send someone to bring the flower to Haarlem. But——"

"But what, Cornelius?"

"But what will happen if the flower is not black?" said Cornelius.

"You will know tomorrow, or the next day, whether the flower is black or not," said Rosa.

"That is a long time to wait. Could you not make some sign so that I may know?"

"If the flower opens at night," said Rosa, "I will come and tell you myself. If it opens during the day, I will put a note under the door."

The clock struck ten.

"I must go now," said Rosa. "We shall know tomorrow whether the flower is black."

Twenty

WATCH! WATCH!

That night Cornelius slept very little. Every few minutes he thought that he heard the voice of Rosa, and jumped up from his bed. "Rosa is watching the flower," he thought. "How I wish that I could be watching it too! What will the world say when it hears that the great Black Tulip has been found! That it has been grown by Cornelius Van Baerle and Rosa—in a prison!"

The long, dark hours passed by. There was no news, the tulip was not yet in flower.

The hours of morning passed slowly by. Afternoon became golden towards evening; and evening darkened into night.

The clock struck nine.

Then Rosa came.

She came running along with quick feet full of joy.

"Well?" said Cornelius.

"All is going on well," said Rosa; "but it has not flowered yet. It will flower tonight."

"But will it be black?"

"Black as coal, black as night; I am sure it will be!"

"Dear Rosa, I have been dreaming all night about——"

"About the tulip?" said Rosa.

"About you first, and then about the tulip second," said Cornelius wisely. "And I have been thinking about what we must do."

"And what must we do?" asked Rosa.

"I have decided that we must find a man to carry a message," said Cornelius.

"Oh, is that all? I have found a man to carry the message."

"Is he safe? Can we trust him?" asked Cornelius.

"Oh, yes! He loves me."

"It is not Jacob?"

"Oh, no. His name is Ralph. He is a nice young man, and he loves me," said Rosa.

"Oh!"

"But he is too young. You said the young man must be between twenty-six and twenty-eight, but this man is only twenty-five."

"Ah!" said Cornelius.

Then Cornelius spoke again:

"This young man must reach Haarlem in ten hours. You must write a letter and he will take it to the President[1] of the Flower-growers; and the President will come here at once."

"But if the President does not come quickly and the tulip is no longer in flower?" said Rosa.

"He *will* come. He is a tulip-lover. He will come immediately to see such a wonderful flower. Even if he waits two days, the tulip will still be in flower; he will give you a paper saying that he has received the flower; then you will give him the tulip and he will take it to

[1] President = chief, head man.

Haarlem. I wish we could take the flower to him ourselves. But that is impossible.—No one must see the flower before the President has seen it. He must see it first of all. If anyone else sees it, it may be stolen."

"Oh! " said Rosa.

"Did you not tell me that Jacob is a thief? " said Cornelius. "This tulip is worth a hundred thousand guilders. Many people would be ready to steal a hundred thousand guilders. You must watch the flower carefully. Watch! Watch! "

"I shall watch. I shall be very careful," said Rosa.

"You are wonderful, dear Rosa; you are as wonderful as—as——"

"As the Black Tulip," said Rosa. "Good night."

Twenty-one

THE TULIP OPENS

During part of the night Cornelius stayed at his window looking at the stars and listening to every sound.

"Down there," he thought, "is Rosa. She is watching the flower every minute. It is growing; it is opening. There are two things dearest to me in all the world—Rosa and my tulip. She is bright as a star, and my tulip is black, black as the night."

He saw a falling star, a line of light in the sky.

"Ah! " he said, "that is a sign."

It seemed as if it was a sign, for at that moment there came the sound of footsteps, and Rosa said:

"Cornelius! Come quickly! Look!"

He ran to the door.

"It is open. Here it is." She held up the flower-pot in one hand, and in the other hand she held the lamp.

"Oh!" cried Cornelius. "I thank God for His kindness to me, a poor prisoner!"

The tulip was beautiful. It was eighteen inches high. It had four green leaves; and its flower was BLACK—black as coal, black as a night when there is no moon or stars.

"Rosa!" he cried, "write; write quickly."

"I have written," said Rosa. "The letter is ready."

Cornelius took the letter. Rosa's writing was much better than it had been.

"Mr. President,

"The Black Tulip is just going to open. Perhaps it will open in ten minutes. As soon as it opens, I shall send a message asking you to come and take it from the prison in Loevestein. I am the daughter of the prison-keeper, Gryphus. This is the reason why I cannot bring the tulip to you.

"I wish to have the tulip named Rosa Baerle.

"Now it has opened! It is black. Come, Mr. President. Come!

Rosa Gryphus."

"That is a very good letter," said Cornelius. "I could not have written such a letter myself. It is simple; it is clear."

"What is the name of the President?" asked Rosa.

"I will write the name. Give me the letter."

Cornelius wrote: *"To Mr. Van Herysen, President of the Flower-growers at Haarlem."*

"And now, Rosa, go! go! And let us pray God, who has protected us, that He will protect our flower."

Twenty-two

DANGER!

Indeed the young people were in great need of being protected. They had never been in greater danger.

The reader, of course, knows that Jacob was really Boxtel, and Boxtel had come to Loevestein so as to find the Black Tulip. He made friends with Gryphus and even made Gryphus believe that he wanted to marry his daughter Rosa. He told Gryphus that Cornelius was a very dangerous prisoner and was making plans against the government. Soon he learnt that Rosa had one of the bulbs; he followed her everywhere.

He saw Rosa take a flower-pot to her room. He got a room in a house just opposite Rosa's window and with his telescope he watched everything that she did. He saw the flower-pot in the window where the morning sun came in. He saw it moved to the other window in the afternoon. He saw the first leaves come up above the ground.

How could he steal it?

Rosa never left her room during the day. She went

out in the evening, but she always took the key with her. At first Boxtel had the idea of stealing the key, but then he thought that she would notice that the key was lost and would have a new and different key made.

Boxtel brought a lot of keys and tried them all when Rosa was talking to Cornelius; but none of the keys fitted. Then Boxtel covered a key with wax and tried to open the door with it. There were marks on the wax; he cut away bits of the key and tried again. At last he made a key which opened the door.

He decided to wait until the last moment, when the tulip flowered. He would steal the tulip at the last moment; then it would be too late for Van Baerle to tell the judges. So every evening, when Rosa went to Cornelius, Boxtel went into Rosa's room to see how the tulip was going on.

He saw Rosa carry the tulip out to show it to Cornelius. He followed her and heard all that was said about the letter. He saw Rosa go back to her room. Then he saw her leave her room again so as to send the letter.

As soon as Rosa left her room, Boxtel opened the door and went in.

He saw Rosa carry the tulip to show Cornelius

Twenty-three

THE TULIP IS STOLEN

Cornelius remained standing by the door, just as Rosa had left him. He was so full of happiness that he did not want to move. Then he went and sat down on the bed. Half an hour passed. Daylight came in through the window. Then he heard steps on the stairs. He saw before him the face of Rosa, white, full of fear. He jumped up.

"Cornelius! Cornelius!" she cried.

"What is it, Rosa?"

"Cornelius, the tulip!"

"Well?"

"How shall I tell you, Cornelius?—Someone has taken it. Someone has stolen it from us!"

"Stolen it?"

"Yes," said Rosa; "someone has stolen it." She fell on her knees.

"But how? Tell me," cried Cornelius.

"Oh, you must not blame me. It was not my fault. I went out of my room for one minute only so as to speak to the man who will carry our message."

"And you left the key behind?" asked Cornelius.

"No! The key was in my hand. I held it all the time," cried Rosa.

"Then how did it happen?" asked Cornelius.

"I cannot understand. I gave the letter to the man. I saw him ride away. I came back: my door was shut.

Everything in my room was just as I had left it. Someone must have made a key for my room."

She was weeping.

"Stolen! Stolen!" cried Cornelius. "All is lost!"

"Oh, Cornelius, forgive me! It will kill me."

Cornelius seized the iron bars and shook them.

"The tulip has been stolen," he cried. "But we know the thief!—It is Jacob! Shall we allow him to carry our flower away to Haarlem? No! We must go after him!"

"But how can I go? I am only a girl."

"Rosa! Rosa! open this door for me and I will find the thief. I will catch him!" cried Cornelius.

"I have not got the key," said Rosa. "How can I open the door if I have not got the key?"

"Your father has the keys. He broke the first bulb. He is a thief too: he is working with Jacob! You must steal his keys."

"Don't talk so loud," said Rosa. "We shall be heard."

"Rosa, if you don't open this door for me I will break it down. I will pull the walls down stone by stone. I shall kill that Jacob, and I shall kill Gryphus—Gryphus who killed my tulip."

"Be quiet, dear Cornelius. Be quiet. I will take his keys. I will do anything; only be quiet!"

There was a sound.

"My father!" cried Rosa.

"Gryphus!" shouted Van Baerle. "Oh, you thief! you thief!"

Old Gryphus had come quietly up the stairs while they were talking. He seized his daughter's arm.

"So you will take my keys?" said Gryphus; "and this is your 'dear Cornelius'. You are helping a prisoner to escape. I'll teach you a lesson!"

Rosa wept.

"And you will kill me, will you, you poor tulip-grower? And my daughter will help you to do it? I shall know how to deal with this business. Away, go away, Rosa; you are no child of mine!"

Suddenly a thought came to Rosa. She ran towards the stairs crying, "All is not lost, Cornelius. Trust me!"

Cornelius fell down upon the floor.

"Stolen! My tulip stolen!" he whispered. He hid his face in his hands and wept.

Twenty-four

ROSA MEETS THE PRESIDENT

Boxtel had left the prison carrying the tulip in a cloth. He jumped into a carriage which was waiting for him and drove away. He could not go fast because he was afraid that the flower might be harmed. At last he reached the town of Delft. There he bought a box and put the tulip carefully into it. He was now no longer afraid of harm to the tulip, and was able to travel faster.

He arrived next morning at Haarlem. Here he put the tulip in a new pot. He broke the old pot and threw

the pieces into a stream. Then he wrote a letter to the President of the Flower-growers saying that he had just arrived in Haarlem, bringing with him a perfect black tulip. He then went to a good inn[1] and waited.

When Rosa left Cornelius, she had decided to bring him back the stolen tulip or never see him again.

She went to her room and took the things necessary for the journey. She took her three hundred guilders. She also took the bulb still in the piece of paper in which Cornelius had put it. She then went to get a carriage. There was only one carriage in the place, and that had certainly been taken by Boxtel. As she could not get a carriage, she got a horse. She hoped that she would be able to travel fast and catch Ralph, the boat-man whom she had sent with a message. She soon saw him riding along the road in front of her. She came to him, and took from him the note (which was now useless). Ralph then went on with her on the journey.

She reached Delft that evening. On the next morning she came to Haarlem only four hours after Boxtel had arrived there.

As soon as she reached Haarlem she went to the house of Mr. Van Herysen, President of the Flower-growers, and asked if she might see him. She was told that he was busy and could not see her.

"Will you tell the President," she said to the servant, "that I wish to speak to him about the Black Tulip."

The servant came back at once, and led her into the house.

[1] Inn = a house in which travellers stay.

Mr. Van Herysen was a very small, thin man with a very large head: indeed he looked rather like a tulip himself.

"Well," he said, "you have come to speak to me about the Black Tulip?"

"Yes," said Rosa. "That is so."

"Is it all right? Has it suffered any harm?"

"Indeed," said Rosa. "It has suffered great harm. It has been stolen!"

"What!"

"Yes; it has been stolen from me," said Rosa.

"Do you know the thief?" asked the President.

"I think I know who the thief is," said Rosa, "but as I am not sure, I must not speak."

"The thief cannot be far away," answered the President, "for I saw the tulip two hours ago."

"You have seen the Black Tulip!" cried Rosa.

"Indeed I have," answered the President.

"Where did you see it?" asked Rosa.

"I saw it with your master. Your master showed it to me."

"My master," cried Rosa.

"Yes," answered the President. "Are you not a servant of Mr. Isaac Boxtel?"

"I do not know who Mr. Boxtel is," said Rosa.

"If the tulip has been stolen," answered the President, "it has been stolen from Mr. Isaac Boxtel."

"Is there any other black tulip beside mine?"

"Yes. There is the tulip of Mr. Isaac Boxtel."

"Is it black?" asked Rosa.

"Yes."

"Black as coal, without any other colour?"

"Yes."

"And you have this tulip here?" asked Rosa.

"No. It is not here. But it will be shown to the judges of the Flower-growers of Haarlem before the prize is given."

"Oh, sir," cried Rosa, "this Boxtel, this Isaac Boxtel who calls himself the owner of the Black Tulip—is he a very thin man?"

"Yes."

"With no hair on his head?" asked Rosa.

"Yes."

"Has he very deep eyes?" asked Rosa.

"Yes."

"Does he hold his head forward as he walks?"

"Indeed you have described Mr. Boxtel very well," said the President.

"And the tulip. Is it in a white flower-pot with yellow marks on the sides?"

"I am not quite sure about that," said the President. "I did not look at the flower-pot. I looked more at the flower than the pot."

"It is my tulip," said Rosa. "It has been stolen from me. I have come to demand it."

"Oh! Oh!" said Mr. Van Herysen. "Are you saying that Mr. Boxtel's tulip is yours?"

"I say that my tulip has been stolen. I say that the Black Tulip is mine," cried Rosa.

"Yours?"

"Yes. I planted it. I took care of it. It's mine—mine—MINE!" cried Rosa.

"Well, go and find Mr. Boxtel. Go to the White Horse Inn where he is staying. You can talk to him and settle the matter with him. I shall write to the judges that I have seen the Black Tulip and that the hundred thousand guilders is to be paid to the person who grew it. Good-bye, my child."

"Oh, sir! Sir!" cried Rosa.

"You are young and pretty," said Mr. Van Herysen, "and there may be some good in you. Be careful. We have a prison in Haarlem. People who don't speak the truth go to prison."

He took up his pen and began to write.

And Rosa went out—to the White Horse Inn.

Twenty-five

THE PRINCE OF ORANGE

Rosa went to the White Horse Inn, followed by the young boat-man who had carried her message. He was a strong young man, ready to fight anyone, and Rosa had told him all the story.

As Rosa went along the street, a sudden thought came to her.

"Oh!" she cried. "I have made a fearful mistake! I have given the alarm: Boxtel will know that I am here. He and all those men will join themselves to-

gether against me.—Perhaps this man is not Jacob: perhaps he is some other man who has also grown a black tulip. Or, if he is Jacob, while we are quarrelling the tulip will die, and then what shall we do?"

A great noise was heard in the street. Doors were opening and shutting. People were running about. "The Prince is coming," cried the people. But Rosa did not notice anything.

"We must go back to the President," she said.

Mr. Van Herysen was still sitting at his table writing. When he saw Rosa again he was very angry.

"Go away!" he cried. "Don't come here. Go to the White Horse Inn, or go——"

"I pray you, listen to what I have to tell you. If you do not, you will be sorry. If you give the prize to the wrong person, what will people say about you? Listen! Let this Mr. Boxtel be brought here before you and me. I say that he is Mr. Jacob and that the tulip is mine. If I do not know him, if I have never seen him before, if it is not my tulip,—I will say nothing. You may do what you like with me."

"But, suppose you say that he is Jacob and that it is your tulip, how can you *prove* it?"

"You are an honest man," said Rosa, "and you would not like to give the prize to the wrong person; and I am honest, too, and would not like to take a prize that did not belong to me."

Van Herysen opened his mouth to answer, but there was a loud shouting in the street and he suddenly jumped up from his chair.

"What is that?" he cried. "Did I hear right? Is it possible?"

He ran out of the room.

Just as Van Herysen reached the top of the stairs he saw a young man coming up. The young man was dressed in blue silk with silver on it, and many fine gentlemen were following after him.

Mr. Van Herysen bowed low. "Sir," he said.

It was the Prince of Orange, Ruler of Holland.

"Sir!" said Mr. Van Herysen, "I am honoured!"

"My dear Mr. Van Herysen," said the Prince, "I am like all the people of Holland; I love boats, cheese and flowers, and of all flowers I love the tulip most. I heard that a wonderful black tulip has been grown, and I have come to ask about it. Have you got the tulip here?"

"I am sorry, sir," answered Mr. Van Herysen, "I have not."

"Where is it?" asked the Prince.

"It is with its owner; he is a tulip-grower of Dort, and he is at the White Horse Inn. His name is Boxtel."

"Send and tell him to come here," ordered the Prince.

"Yes, sir," answered Van Herysen, "but——"

"What is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing; nothing important," answered Van Herysen.

"Everything is important," said the Prince.

"There is a little difficulty," said Van Herysen.

"What is the difficulty?" asked the Prince.

"There is a woman here who says that the tulip is hers, that it has been stolen."

"And what do you think about the matter?" asked the Prince.

"I think, sir," said Van Herysen, "that she may not be honest, and that she wants the hundred thousand guilders."

"How can she prove that the tulip is hers?" asked the Prince.

"I was just going to question her when you came in, sir," said Van Herysen.

"Question her," answered the Prince. "Question her now. I will judge the matter."

The Prince and Mr. Van Herysen came into the room where Rosa was standing. She turned and looked at them; but, not knowing the Prince, she took no more notice of him. The Prince took a book and began to read it—or seemed to be reading it. Then he looked up and made a sign to Van Herysen. "Begin," he said. Then he went on reading his book.

Van Herysen sat down. An officer went to bring Boxtel.

"My child, will you promise to tell me the whole truth about this tulip?"

"Yes; I promise," said Rosa.

"You may speak before this gentleman. He is one of the Flower-growers," said Mr. Van Herysen.

"Yes. But what shall I tell you? I have told you everything already," said Rosa.

"What do you want, then?" asked the President.

"I want you to tell Mr. Boxtel to come here with his tulip. If it is not my tulip I shall truly say so. If it is my tulip, I demand that it be given back to me, even if I have to go before the Prince of Orange himself to get it."

"How will you prove that?" asked Van Herysen.

"God will help me to prove it," she said.

As the Prince of Orange looked at Rosa he thought that he remembered her. Where had he heard that sweet voice before?

"Why do you say that the Black Tulip is yours?" asked Van Herysen.

"I say so because it was planted and grown in my own room," said Rosa.

"In your own room?—Where is your room?"

"At Loevestein. I am the daughter of the prison-keeper there," answered Rosa.

The Prince looked up. "Ah! I remember now," he said quietly. He watched Rosa even more carefully.

"Do you love flowers?" asked Mr. Van Herysen.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know a lot about flowers?" asked Mr. Van Herysen.

Rosa did not answer.

"Do you know a lot about flowers?" he asked again.

Rosa did not answer for a moment. Then she said:

"Can I trust you, as an honest man?"

"Yes, indeed," said Van Herysen.

"Oh, yes," said the Prince.

"Well, I do not know much about flowers. I am only

a poor girl. Three months ago I did not even know how to read and write. The Black Tulip was not found by me."

"By whom was it found?" asked Van Herysen.

"By a poor prisoner at Loevestein."

"By a prisoner at Loevestein!" said the Prince.

There was surprise in the Prince's voice; now he was sure when and where he had heard the voice.

"That was a special prisoner sent there by the government,—a prisoner of state?" said the Prince.

"Yes," answered Rosa. "The tulip was grown by a prisoner of state."

"Go on," said the Prince of Orange. "Go on; let us hear the rest."

"Ah, sir," said Rosa, "I am going to get myself into trouble."

"Indeed," answered Van Herysen, "there are orders that no one should speak to a prisoner of state. Are there not such orders?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you, as daughter of the prison-keeper, talked to this prisoner about flower-growing?" said Mr. Van Herysen.

"Yes, sir, I did," said Rosa, very much afraid. "I saw him every day."

"That is very bad, to talk to a prisoner of state every day," said Mr. Van Herysen.

The Prince saw how frightened Rosa was. He looked up and said: "The matter has nothing to do with the Flower-growers of Haarlem. It is a matter which should

be dealt with by one of the judges in a law-court. As President of the Flower-growers you have only to judge the matter of the tulip. Go on, young woman; go on."

"I thank you, sir," said Van Herysen.

Rosa, now feeling less afraid, told everything which had happened during the past three months. She told how unkind Gryphus had been to the prisoner; how the first bulb had been broken; how sad the prisoner was; what trouble had been taken to make sure that the second bulb should grow; how grieved Cornelius was during that separation, how he would not eat; how happy he was when she went to see him again. And last she told how the tulip was stolen one hour after it had opened.

She spoke so simply that Van Herysen began to believe that this was the truth.

"But," said the Prince, "you have not known the prisoner long."

Rosa opened her large eyes and looked at the stranger. The Prince seemed to draw back into his corner of the room as if he did not wish to be known.

"How do you know that? Why do you say that?" she asked.

"It is only four months since the prison-keeper, Gryphus, and his daughter, were sent from The Hague to Loevestein," said the Prince.

"That is true, sir," said Rosa.

"You yourself asked that your father should be moved from The Hague to Loevestein; you did this so that you might be able to follow this prisoner. Is that not so?"

"Sir!" said Rosa, looking down at the floor.

"What have you to say?" asked the Prince.

"I knew this prisoner at The Hague," said Rosa.

"Happy prisoner!" said the Prince.

Just then the officer who had been sent to bring Boxtel returned. He said that Boxtel was coming with his tulip.

Twenty-six

THE PRINCE AND BOXTEL

Boxtel came into the outer room followed by two men carrying a large box. They put the box on the table. The box was opened; inside it was the tulip.

The Prince got up from his chair; he went into the other room, looked at the flower and came back.

Rosa heard the voice of Boxtel.

"It is he!" she cried. "It is Jacob!"

"Go to the door and look," said the Prince quietly to Rosa.

Rosa went quickly to the door. "It is my tulip! I know it. Oh, poor Cornelius!" she cried.

The Prince went to the door. Bright sunlight from the window fell upon his face: Rosa felt more and more sure that she had seen this man somewhere before.

"Mr. Boxtel," said the Prince, "will you please come here."

Boxtel came into the room. He cried: "It is the Prince of Orange. Sir!"

"The Prince of Orange!" cried Rosa.

Hearing Rosa's voice Boxtel turned, and seemed unpleasantly surprised.

"Ah!" thought the Prince, "he is not pleased to see Rosa."

Boxtel tried to seem calm.

"Mr. Boxtel," said the Prince, "you have discovered the secret of growing a black tulip?"

"Yes, sir," said Boxtel. His voice shook.

"But," said the Prince, "there is a young lady here who says that she discovered it."

Boxtel gave a short laugh. The Prince watched him closely.

"Then you do not know this young girl?" said the Prince.

"No, sir," answered Boxtel.

"And you, child, do you know Mr. Boxtel?"

"No, sir; I don't know Mr. Boxtel; but I know Mr. Jacob," answered Rosa.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that at Loevestein this man called himself Mr. Jacob."

"What is your answer to that, Mr. Boxtel?" asked the Prince.

"I say that she is not speaking the truth," answered Boxtel.

"Do you say that you were never at Loevestein?" said the Prince.

Boxtel did not answer at once. The eyes of the Prince were fixed upon him.

"I have been at Loevestein," he said at last, "but I did not steal the tulip."

"You did steal it! You stole it from my room," cried Rosa angrily.

"I did not!"

"Now listen to me," said Rosa, "didn't you follow me into the garden on the day when I made the earth ready for the bulb? Didn't you follow me into the garden on the day when I pretended to plant it—but I did not plant it. And, as soon as I went out of the garden, didn't you run to the place where you hoped to find the bulb? Didn't you put your hands into the earth—but you could not find it because it was not there. That was all a trick: it was just a trick to find out what you were—a thief! Say, is not this all true?"

Boxtel did not answer. He turned to the Prince.

"Sir," he said, "for twenty years I have grown tulips at Dort. I am well known among tulip-growers. I have produced several new kinds of tulip. Now this young woman knew that I had produced the Black Tulip. She made a plan with her lover (the prisoner at Loevestein) to steal the prize of one hundred thousand guilders."

"*Yah! Yah!*" cried Rosa, wild with anger.

"Silence!" said the Prince. Then he turned to Boxtel.

"And who is this prisoner whom you speak of as the girl's lover?"

Rosa was afraid; for Cornelius was a specially danger-

ous prisoner whom the keeper must watch carefully.

Boxtel was very pleased at the question.

"The prisoner, sir, is a specially dangerous man," he answered. "At one time the judge ordered that his head should be cut off. You may easily guess how little you can believe the word of such a man."

"What is his name?" asked the Prince.

Rosa hid her face in her hands.

"His name is Cornelius Van Baerle, and he was a friend of Cornelius De Witte," said Boxtel.

The Prince looked surprised. His eyes were bright. He went to Rosa.

"Take away your hands from your face," he said. "You asked me to move your father from The Hague to Loevestein because you wanted to follow Van Baerle. Is that not true?"

"Yes, sir," said Rosa. "It is true."

"Go on," said the Prince to Boxtel.

"I have nothing more to say," said Boxtel. "You know all. There is one thing which I might add; but I did not want to add it because a man does not like to tell such things. I came to Loevestein because I had business to do there. I met Gryphus; I wanted to marry his daughter, Rosa. I am not rich. I told her and her father that I had a hope of winning one hundred thousand guilders for my tulip. I showed them the plant. Her lover had grown a few tulips at Dort. He was really making plans against the government. He grew tulips only so as to hide his real work. Gryphus and his daughter decided to steal my tulip. On the evening

when the flower was expected to open, this young woman took the plant away. She carried it to her room. She showed it to people as her tulip. She wrote a letter to the President of the Flower-growers saying that she had grown it.—I took it from her room."

"Oh, what lies! Lies!" cried Rosa, throwing herself at the feet of the Prince.

Twenty-seven

WHERE IS THE THIRD BULB?

The Prince thought that Rosa was a wrong-doer, and yet he felt sorry for her, as she lay at his feet.

"You have done very wrong, my child," he said. "Perhaps your lover led you into wrong-doing. You are young and have an honest look; I cannot believe that it is all your fault."

"Sir! Sir!" cried Rosa, "Cornelius did nothing wrong, nothing at all."

"You mean that he did not tell you to steal the tulip?" said the Prince.

"He did not even do the wrong thing for which he was put in prison."

"He was put in prison because he held certain letters written by Cornelius De Witte to the King of France," said the Prince.

"He knew nothing about those letters. If he had known about those letters, he would have told me. I know him. Oh, I wish that you knew him as I do!"

"He was a friend of De Witte," cried Boxtel. "The Prince knows him well; he gave him his life."

"Silence!" said the Prince. "These matters are matters of government and have nothing to do with you."

Then the Prince went on:

"Do not be afraid, Mr. Boxtel," he said, "I shall do what is right about your tulip." He turned to Rosa. "You, my child, were going to do a very wrong thing, but it was not your fault. Van Baerle led you into wrong-doing. He made plans against the government, but now we see that he is also a thief."

"A thief!" cried Rosa. "Cornelius a thief! How can you say such a thing? This man here, this Jacob, this Boxtel is the thief."

"Prove it," said Boxtel, "—if you can."

"I will prove it. With God's help I will!" cried Rosa. Then she turned to Boxtel and said:

"The tulip is yours?"

"It is," he answered.

"How many bulbs were there?" asked Rosa.

Boxtel did not answer at once. But he knew that there are usually three bulbs, so he answered,—

"Three."

"Where are the three bulbs? What has happened to them?"

"Well," he said, "one of them did not grow. The second produced this black tulip."

"And the third?" said Rosa.

"The third?"

"Yes," cried Rosa, "the third! Where is it?"

"I have it at my home," said Boxtel.

"At your home," said Rosa. "At Loevestein or at Dort?"

"At Dort," said Boxtel.

"You are telling lies!" cried Rosa. Then she turned to the Prince. "Sir," she said, "I will tell you the true story of those bulbs. My father put his foot on the first in Van Baerle's prison-room; and this man knows it, for he was very angry with my father. The second bulb, planted by me, produced the Black Tulip, and the third——"

"Yes?—The third bulb?" said the Prince.

"Here it is," said Rosa, taking it out from her dress. "Here it is in the same paper in which Cornelius Van Baerle put it when he was being led out to his death. Here, sir, take it!"

The Prince took the bulb and looked at it very carefully.

"But, sir," said Boxtel, "this young woman may have stolen the bulb as she stole the tulip." The Prince did not answer; he was looking at the bulb. Rosa was reading the paper. Her eyes were bright. Then she suddenly gave a cry and held out the paper to the Prince.

"Read, sir; read it!"

The Prince gave the bulb to Van Herysen. Then he took the paper and read. His eyes were full of pain: he nearly let the paper fall to the ground. It was that page taken out of a book which Cornelius De Witte gave to Craeke and sent to Van Baerle as a message.

"Read, sir; read it!"

"My dear Van Baerle,

"Please burn the letters which I gave you without looking at them. It is not safe for you to know what is written in them. Burn them and you will save the lives and good name of Cornelius and John de Witte.

Cornelius De Witte.

August 20th, 1672."

This piece of paper proved two things. It proved that Van Baerle did not know what was in the letters and was not making any plans against the government; and it proved that he was the owner of the tulip.

Rosa looked at the Prince. "You see!" said her eyes though her lips did not move.

The Prince looked at Rosa. "Be quiet"; said his eyes; "wait."

The Prince was thinking. He was thinking of the past, of the wrong which he had done in letting the people kill the De Witte brothers. Then he looked up.

"Go, Mr. Boxtel," he said; "I shall do the right thing." He turned to Van Herysen.

"You, my dear Mr. Van Herysen, please take care of this young woman and of the tulip.—Good-bye."

He went down the stairs. They heard the shouting of the crowd outside in the street: "Long live the Prince."

Boxtel went back to the inn. He was afraid. What was written on that paper which Rosa gave to the Prince? He wished that he knew. What did it all mean?

And Rosa—Rosa went up to the tulip and kissed its leaves. "Oh, thank you, God," she whispered, "for making my good Cornelius teach me how to read."

Twenty-eight

THE PRINCE SENDS A LETTER

Rosa and the tulip remained at the house of Mr. Van Herysen. She stayed there for some days. Then, one evening, an officer of the Prince of Orange came to Van Herysen's house ordering Rosa to go to the Town Hall.

There was a large room in the building; there the Prince sat writing. The Prince went on writing; a big dog lay on the floor near him. Then the Prince looked and saw Rosa standing there.

"Come here, my child," he said.

She came towards the table.

"Sit down," he said.

She sat down. The dog came up to Rosa and began to make friends with her.

"Ah!" said the Prince, "you both come from the same part of the country; that is why you make friends so easily."

Then he turned to Rosa. "Now, my child," he said, "we are alone. Let us speak together."

Rosa was afraid; yet there was only kindness in the Prince's face.

"Sir," she said.

"You have a father at Loevestein?" he said.

"Yes, sir."

"You do not love him?"

"I do not," she said. "As a daughter I ought to love him; but I do not."

"A child ought to love her father," he said. "But it is right to speak the truth—Why do you not love your father?"

"Because he is a bad man," said Rosa. "He is unkind to the prisoners."

"Unkind to all of them?"

"He is specially unkind to Van Baerle," said Rosa.

"And Van Baerle is your lover?"

"I love him, sir," she said.

"Since when have you loved him?" asked the Prince.

"Since the day when I first saw him," answered Rosa. "—That was the day after the death of Cornelius and John De Witte."

"What is the use of loving a man who will live all his life in prison, and die there?" asked the Prince.

"If he lives and dies in prison I can help him in life and in death," answered Rosa.

"And would you be satisfied to be the wife of a prisoner?"

"As the wife of Mr. Van Baerle I should be the proudest and happiest woman in the world. But——"

"But what?" asked the Prince.

"I dare not say, sir," answered Rosa.

She looked up at the Prince. Her eyes prayed him to show mercy.

"Ah, I understand you," he said, "you hope that I shall help you?"

"Yes, sir," answered Rosa.

The Prince closed the letter which he had been writing. He called one of his officers.

"Captain Van Decken, take this letter to Loevestein. Read the orders to the officer in charge of the prison and see that they are obeyed."

The officer took the letter and left the room. Soon afterwards the sound of a horse was heard in the yard below. The officer rode quickly away to Loevestein.

"My child," said the Prince, "the Feast of the Tulip will be on Sunday next—on the third day from now. Take these five hundred guilders. Dress yourself nicely."

"How do you wish me to be dressed, sir?" asked Rosa.

"Dress yourself as a bride,"[1] said the Prince.

Twenty-nine

GRYPHUS GETS A BEATING

We must go back to Gryphus and Cornelius at Loevestein and learn what they have been doing all this time.

Gryphus did not know till midday that his daughter had left the house. He thought that she was weeping in her room when really she was far on her way towards Haarlem. When dinner-time came he waited and waited, and then he went to her room to call her. He

[1] Bride = a girl who is just going to be married.

knocked, but she did not answer. The door was shut; he broke it open; but Rosa was not there.

When Gryphus found that his daughter had gone, he was very angry. He went up to Van Baerle, called him all the bad names he could think of, and threw the furniture of the room about. Cornelius said nothing. He was too sad to answer or even to move when Gryphus hit him.

Gryphus next went to look for his friend Jacob, but could not find him. He wondered whether Jacob had run away with Rosa. He did not know what to think.

On the third morning after Rosa went, Gryphus came to Cornelius' room angrier than usual.

Cornelius was standing by the window looking towards Dort. The pigeons were still there, flying round the window, but hope had flown away from his heart. Where was Rosa? Could she not come to him? Could she send no message? What was Gryphus doing to her? He might be unkind to her. Cornelius could not bear the thought. He felt so powerless. He wanted to do something. He wanted to write to Rosa—but where was she? And Gryphus had taken his paper and pencil away. He tried to think of some way of escaping from the prison.

"But how can I escape?" he said. "The window is barred: the door is strong, and Gryphus is watchful.—Perhaps some day Gryphus will hit me, and I will take hold of his neck and will kill him. Then I shall go down the stairs, and I will let Rosa out of her room.—But he is Rosa's father! She could not love me if I

killed her father, however bad he is. No! that plan is useless."

Then Gryphus came into the room. He had a big stick in his hand. His eyes were bright with anger. It was clear that he meant to do harm.

Cornelius heard Gryphus come in, but he did not turn round. He was singing:

"I am a flower, a child of the fire
That runs through the world, and never dies.
I am the daughter of water and air,
A child of the earth and sky."

This song made Gryphus even angrier.

"Hullo, you singer, don't you hear me?" he said.

Cornelius turned round. "Good morning," he said; then he went on singing:

"My feet are set in the good brown earth
And I lift up my head to the sky;
My soul came from heaven at my birth
And goes back to heaven when I die."

Gryphus went up to the prisoner and shook his stick.

"Don't you see," he said, "that I have brought something to force you to tell me the truth?"

"Do you mean to hit me with that?" said Cornelius.

"I do. Why not?" answered Gryphus.

"Because," answered Cornelius, "any prison-keeper who raises his hand against a prisoner will lose his office. That is written in the law."

"This isn't my hand," said Gryphus; "it's a stick. The law says that I may not hit you with my hand, but it doesn't say anything about a stick."

"The law," said Cornelius, "says that anyone who takes up a stick shall be beaten with a stick."

"Oh, then!" cried Gryphus, "you force me to use something else." He took up a knife.

"A knife!" cried Cornelius. He seized the stick and prepared to defend himself.

They stood facing each other.

"Well," said Cornelius, "what do you want?"

"I want my daughter, Rosa," said Gryphus.

"Your daughter?"

"Yes; you have taken her away or sent her away, and I don't know where she is."

"Well, if you don't know," said Cornelius, "I don't know either."

"I'll make you speak!" said Gryphus, coming forward with the knife in his hand.

Cornelius hit his arm with the stick and the knife fell on the floor. Then he beat Gryphus so that the prison-keeper cried out.

Other prison-keepers came running to the place. They seized Cornelius.

Gryphus stood up. "According to the law, any prisoner who hits a prison-keeper shall be shot. You shall be shot. You shall be taken outside the prison and shot at once."

Thirty

CORNELIUS GOES TO HAARLEM

An officer came into the room.

"Is this Room Number 11?" he asked.

"Yes, captain."

"Where is the prisoner?"

"Here I am, sir," said Cornelius.

"Are you Doctor Cornelius Van Baerle?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Then follow me," said the officer.

"Oh!" said Cornelius to Gryphus, "is he taking me out to shoot me?"

"Yes," said Gryphus, "and that officer is a special officer of the Prince of Orange, so you may be sure that you are going to be shot at once."

"And so it all ends," thought Cornelius. "I cannot give my name to a child or a flower or a book—the three things by which a man may be remembered."

The officer walked on; Cornelius followed.

"And I shall never see Rosa again," thought Cornelius.

They reached the outside of the prison. Cornelius expected to see a line of soldiers all ready to shoot him. He saw some soldiers, but they were not standing in line, and they had no guns. They were just talking to each other.

Gryphus ran out of the prison behind Cornelius and shouted bad names at him.

"I do not think it right," said Cornelius, "that the man should speak to me like that now."

"Well," answered the officer, "you can't expect him to be pleased with you. You gave him a good beating."

"I only beat him because he came at me with a knife," answered Cornelius.

"Well, let him talk," answered the officer. "What does it matter to you now?"

A cold feeling came into Van Baerle's heart at these words.

"Tell me," he said, "where am I to go now?"

The officer pointed to a carriage drawn by four horses.

"Get in," said the officer.

"Oh," said Cornelius, "they are going to take me into the centre of the city before they kill me."

A soldier was standing near. "No," said the soldier; "I don't think they will do that. But they sometimes take a prisoner to his own town and shoot him in front of his house."

"Thank you," said Cornelius. "Thank you for those kind words!"

The carriage drove on.

"Give me back my daughter," shouted Gryphus as it moved away.

"If they take me to Dort," thought Cornelius, "I shall see my house and garden:—but there are no flowers in the garden now."

The carriage drove on during the whole day. It passed by Dort and went through Rotterdam. It came to Delft. At five o'clock in the evening they had travelled about eighty miles.

"Where are we going?" said Cornelius to the officer.

The officer did not answer.

They spent the night in the carriage. Next morning Cornelius saw that they were beyond Leyden. The North Sea was on his left and the Zuider Zee on his right.

Three hours later they came into Haarlem.

Thirty-one

THE FEAST OF TULIPS

The fifteenth of May in the year 1673 was a great day in the city of Haarlem. It was always a great feast day—the Feast of the Tulip. This year's Feast day was one of special importance because of the Black Tulip.

All had been made ready in an open square for the Prince to give the prize of one hundred thousand guilders to the happy person who had produced a black tulip. The great men of the city marched in a long line into the square. First came Mr. Van Herysen, dressed all in black. Behind him came other important people among the Flower-growers of Haarlem. Behind them came learned men, judges, officers and lords. In the centre of all these people was carried the Black Tulip. It stood upon a cloth made of white silk with gold round the edge.

All the people shouted when Mr. Van Herysen appeared. They shouted again for the Flower-growers and the lords and judges and learned men, and they shouted louder still when the Black Tulip itself appeared.

Then all the people looked to see who was the happy person who was going to receive the prize. Where was the grower of the tulip?

Mr. Van Herysen spoke. He spoke for some time. "And now," he said, "I will ask the winner of the prize, the grower of the Black Tulip, to come forward and show himself."

Mr. Isaac Boxtel came forward. His eyes were fixed, not upon the Black Tulip, but upon the bag of gold—one hundred thousand guilders—which lay beside it.

The people shouted.

Isaac Boxtel still looked at the gold; but he could not receive it yet, because the Prince of Orange had not yet come.

"In a few minutes the Prince will arrive," thought Boxtel; "he will give me the bag of gold and say that this tulip is named The Black Tulip of Boxtel." He looked at the faces of the people in the crowd; he was afraid that he might see there the face of Rosa Gryphus. Was she there? Was there any danger that she might appear and cause trouble? He looked carefully. No, she was not there.

In the centre of the square there was a raised place on which was set a gold chair for the Prince of Orange and a table upon which the Black Tulip would be set.

Two lines of beautiful girls walked on each side of the tulip as it was carried up and set upon the table. All the people shouted again.

Far away, in the street beyond the crowd, a carriage might have been seen.—It *might* have been seen, but everyone was looking at the Black Tulip. The carriage was covered with dust and the horses were tired. It had travelled far.

Thirty-two

THE PRINCE ARRIVES

Inside the carriage sat Cornelius Van Baerle and the officer. Cornelius was very tired from the long journey, but he looked out of the window of the carriage at the people.

"Why are there so many people in the square?" he asked. "Is it a feast?"

"Yes," answered the officer; "it is a feast."

"Ah!" said Cornelius sadly, "I have little interest in feasts. There is no joy left for me in this world."

The carriage drove on.

"I see many flowers," said Cornelius. "Is it a feast of flowers?"

"Yes," answered the officer, "it is the great Feast of the Flowers. The people of Haarlem love flowers."

"What beautiful colours!—I love flowers!" cried Cornelius.

"Stop," said the officer to the driver, "stop so that the gentleman may see the flowers."

"Thank you for your kindness," said Van Baerle, "but the joy of others gives me pain. Tell the man to drive on."

"Just as you wish," said the officer. "I ordered the driver to stop because I thought that you loved flowers, and this is the feast of one flower."

"Of what flower?" asked Cornelius.

"The tulip."

"The Tulip!" cried Cornelius. "Is to-day the Feast of the Tulip?"

"Yes; but, if it gives you pain, let us drive on."

A thought came to Cornelius.

"Is the prize given to-day?" he asked.

"Yes," said the officer. "To-day a prize will be given for the Black Tulip."

Van Baerle's face was white.

"Ah!" he said, "I am sorry for all these people, because they will not see what they have come to see."

"What do you mean?" asked the officer.

"I mean," said Cornelius, "that they have come to see a black tulip, but the Black Tulip will not be found except by one person, whom I know."

"Then that person has found it," answered the officer. "All the people in Haarlem to-day are looking at the Black Tulip."

Cornelius put his head out of the window of the carriage.

"The Black Tulip!" he cried. "Where is it? Where is it?"

"There!" said the officer, "up there on the table."

"I do not see it," cried Van Baerle.

"Come along. We must drive on," said the officer.

"Oh, let me see it!" cried Cornelius. "Let me look once more. Is it possible? Is the tulip *quite* black—black as coal, with no other colour in it? Let me get down from the carriage and see it close."

"Are you mad? How could I allow such a thing?"

"I beg you!"

"You forget that you are a prisoner," said the officer.

"I am a prisoner," answered Van Baerle, "but you may trust me. I promise you that I will not run away. Oh, let me see the tulip!"

"Drive on!" said the officer.

"Oh, be kind to me. My whole life depends upon your kindness. Let me see the tulip. You don't know what feelings there are in my heart. Perhaps this may be my tulip! Perhaps it is the tulip which was stolen from Rosa. Oh, let me get down. I must see the flower. You may kill me afterwards, but I must see it."

"Silence! Come back into the carriage. Here is the Prince of Orange coming, and if he sees you disobeying my orders he will be very angry with me."

Cornelius got quickly back into the carriage, for he did not want to cause trouble to the officer.

Some of the Prince's men rode past; then Cornelius put his head out of the window again, just as the Prince came near his carriage. The Prince looked at him; he stopped.

"Who is this man?" he asked.

"Sir," said the officer, jumping out of the carriage, "this is the prisoner whom I have brought from Loevestein as you ordered."

"Well; what does he want?" said the Prince.

"He wants to stop here for a short time," said the officer.

"I want to see the Black Tulip!" cried Van Baerle. "Sir, I pray you, let me see the Black Tulip; and when I have seen it, I am ready to die."

"Silence! Come back into the carriage."

The Prince turned to the officer.

"Is this the prisoner who gave so much trouble at Loevestein and tried to kill the prison-keeper?" said the Prince, looking at Cornelius coldly.

These words seemed to show Cornelius that all hope was lost. The Prince knew all about him. He did not try to struggle or to defend himself. He seemed to the Prince like a poor little child who had done no wrong—and yet had no hope; and the Prince understood.

"Allow the prisoner to get down, and let him see the tulip," he said; "it is well worth seeing."

"Thank you, sir; thank you!" cried Cornelius. He nearly fell to the ground, but the officer held him up.

The Prince went on. The crowd shouted. The music played. He sat down on the golden chair beside the tulip.

Thirty-three

THE PRIZE

Cornelius was led by four soldiers towards the Black Tulip. The nearer he came to it, the more excited he became.

At last he saw it—the flower which he could see once and never again. A line of beautiful girls stood round it. It was wonderful—a wonderful flower; yet the more he looked at it, the sadder he felt. He looked round to see anyone of whom he might ask one question—"Who is the happy grower of that lovely thing?"

Then the Prince of Orange stood up. As he looked out over the crowd he saw only three people. In front of him he saw Boxtel eagerly watching him, and the money. To his right he saw Cornelius with his eyes, his heart, his life, his love fixed upon the tulip. And to the left stood Rosa, dressed as a bride, but there were tears in her eyes. Near her stood one of his officers who was in charge of her.

The Prince spoke calmly and quietly; the fifty thousand people listened.

"You all know the reason for which we are present to-day. A prize of one hundred thousand guilders has been offered to anyone who can grow a black tulip. The black tulip has been grown. It is here, before us. The story of how it was grown and the name of the grower will be written in the Book of Honour of this city.—Now let the owner of the tulip come forward."

The Prince looked at the three people standing among the crowd—Boxtel, Cornelius, Rosa. Boxtel ran forward, pushing people away from his path. Cornelius looked up, and made a little movement; then stopped. Then he saw the officer who was in charge of Rosa lead the girl forward.

Boxtel's face was red with anger. Cornelius cried out with joy, "Rosa! Rosa!"

"This tulip is yours, is it not, my child?" said the Prince.

"Yes, sir," said Rosa.

"Oh!" said Cornelius, "am I forgotten?—I loved her, and she has forgotten me."

"Ah!" cried Boxtel, "all is lost!"

"This tulip," continued the Prince, "is named 'The Black Tulip of Rosa Baerle', as Rosa Baerle will be the future name of this lady."

Cornelius rushed forward, wild with joy.

The Prince took Rosa's hand and put it in Cornelius Van Baerle's hand.

At the same moment a man fell to the ground. It was Boxtel. All his hopes were gone. They raised him up. He was quite dead.

But the feast went on.

Music played and the Flower-growers and the lords and judges and great men marched out of the square, and among them were Rosa and Cornelius, walking hand in hand. They came to the Town Hall; there the Prince stopped.

The Prince pointed to the bag of one hundred thousand guilders which was being carried beside the tulip.

"It is difficult," said the Prince, "to judge by whom this money was gained—by you, or by Rosa. You, Cornelius Van Baerle, found the bulb, but she grew it and brought it into flower. I shall give the money to her at her marriage. The money is a prize given to her, not only for growing the tulip, but for her honesty and her bravery."[1]

The Prince turned to Cornelius; he held in his hand the page from the book of Cornelius De Witte.

"You have to thank Rosa not only for growing the

[1] Noun of "brave".

tulip, but also for proving that you should now be set free from prison. You were put in prison for a thing which you did not do. Your house, lands and money will also be given back to you. You were a friend of the brothers De Witte; you are named after Cornelius De Witte. Remain worthy of that name. The brothers De Witte were great men who were unjustly killed at a time of public anger. Their country, Holland, is proud of them."

The two lovers knelt down before the Prince.

"Ah," said the Prince sadly, "you are happy, happier than I, your Prince, can ever be. I dream of the greatness of Holland; you dream of its beauty and its real greatness—the beauty of its flowers."

He got into his carriage and drove away.

And so the story ends.

Cornelius and Rosa were married; they had two beautiful children, and many beautiful tulips. And old Gryphus was the gardener. He kept the tulips as a prison-keeper keeps his prisoners: the flowers stood up in straight rows as he marched up and down giving them their water; and no cat ever dared to come near Gryphus' garden.

Over the door of the house in which Cornelius and Rosa lived these words are written:

"Those who have suffered much, have a right to be happy."

That is the end of the story.

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